

Meeting Minutes  
Northeast Great Basin Resource Advisory Council  
June 15, 2011  
Elko Nevada

**I. RAC Attendance and Welcome**

Tony Carone, Energy/Minerals  
Jake Carter, Grazing  
Tom Connolly, Grazing  
Vince Garcia, Vice Chairman, Native American Tribes  
Bruce Holmgren, State Agency  
Larry Hyslop, Wildlife  
Kevin Lee, Transportation  
Cyd McMullen, Archaeology  
Jeff White, Chairman, Energy/Minerals  
John Winnepenninkx, Wild Horse & Burro  
Bill Wolf, Public-at-large  
Julie VonTobel-Gleason representing the MOSO RAC, Wild Horse & Burro Sub Committee.

Jeff White brought the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, described tour/field trip agenda.

- Noted that the wild horse working group letter of advice and recommendation and the SNPLMA proposals were not distributed to the Northeast Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members and that he and the BLM noted that and will distribute.

**II. Warm Creek Ranch**

Clay Nannini and Dale Butler met the RAC and public at the Warm Creek Ranch. Clay and Dale are employed by Madeline Pickens, property owner of Warm Creek Ranch.

- Bryan Fuell discussed the Ranch and the horses that were purchased by Mrs. Pickens. Some discussion between publics' and Clay ensued. Wild horses; the noxious weed infestation on the ranch property; loss of AUMs from removing cattle grazing; and a request from the County Commissioners through Grant Gerber to come out and see the horses. Clay Nannini said the Elko County Commisoners were welcome to visit the ranch.

**III. Spruce Kiosk**

Jeff White opened the meeting up for public comment at 10:00 am.

- Peter Shepherd, retired wildlife biologist, provided written comments (attached), and then verbally summarized his concerns.
- Eric Struhsacker, Vice President of Renaissance Gold, has claims within the Spruce Mountain area, concerned that access be maintained.

- Don Johns, concerned that fire is an issue and wonders if horses might be of value in reducing cheat grass amounts.
- Robin Boies proposed that wild horses in this area be managed under a collaborative management effort. Proposes that the RAC consider that in their recommendations.
- Julie Gleeson from the Mohave RAC expressed appreciation to be included in this RAC meeting and working together, sharing issues.
- Grant Gerber, representing Demar Dahl of the Elko County Commission. Mr. Gerber said that Commissioner Demar expressed disappointment that the RAC meeting was scheduled on a day that the County Commission was meeting. Requested that a write-up be provided to the County of today's meeting. Grant asked that the RAC not schedule meetings when the county can't attend, elected officials need to be present.
  - Passed out a copy of an email with a photo (attached) that suggested Mrs. Pickens turned out her private horses on public land. He said he confirmed that that did not happen with Clay Nannini and Clay stated that the photographer was misinformed and that none of Mrs. Pickens' horses had been released on to public land.
  - Commented on historic records from the Ogden Nash Journal. The journal says that in 1828-1829 there were no wildhorses here or wildlife, not enough forage. He is not opposed to what Mrs. Pickens does on private property, but when what she does impinges on wildlife or public interests, he takes exception.
  - Reiterated that meetings should be scheduled when county government representatives can attend.
- Ali Bear asked how a private citizen or Madeline Pickens will be able to gather her horses that move onto public lands. Can she use a Super Cub?
- Clay Nannini said that the photo in the email Grant handed out was taken by a photographer that didn't know what he was looking at. Wild horses are here now as is wildlife, asked Grant to restate his point. Grant explained that change happened after grazing occurred in the area, improving soil and vegetation conditions and there were no fires. Once they took livestock off, fires started.
- Dale Butler stated that Gerber is correct in that we have better soil. As long as we can keep animals where they should be, keep them from beating out an area, it should be ok. Out here it is about water.
- Grant Gerber to Ali Bear stated that the point is how the horses are going to be gathered. BLM won't be able to tell which horses are private and which are public. Before the WH&B Act, the ranchers managed the horses.
- Robin Boies asked if the BLM had a good census of the current population of wild horses in the HMA. Suggested that it is something that is important, maybe take other stakeholders out as census is completed.

Bryan Fuell continued the meeting with a discussion on information provided in the packet and resource issues occurring at Spruce, this lead into a presentation on the recreation proposal at Spruce Mountain.

Tamara Hawthorne presented on the amendment to the Wells Resource Management Plan (RMP) for recreation at Spruce Mountain. She gave a background and history on the Elko Convention and Visitor Authority's (ECVA) grant for Spruce Mountain; the Recreation

Trails EA; the Settlement Agreement; and work completed up to today. She explained that the Notice of Intent to begin public scoping is expected to be published in the Federal Register in the next 30 days. BLM plans to create an Extensive Recreation Management Area at Spruce; change the Off highway vehicle area designation from one of “open” in the current RMP to one of “limited” (as a result of the settlement travel is currently restricted to existing roads and trails); and create a detailed travel network in the area. Management concerns to be included in the plan are crucial winter range for mule deer; migration corridor for mule deer; deer and elk summer range; water sources; migratory birds; ferruginous hawks; bats; pygmy rabbits; burrowing owls; historic and cultural resources including pre-historic antelope traps and Sprucemont Mining District; private lands; oil and gas leasing; public safety; OHV use including staging areas and play areas; hunting including shed horn hunting; Pinion nut collecting; fuels projects; active mining claims; Wilderness Study Area; wild horses; access; right-of-ways and patented mining claims; invasive weeds; Native American concerns; and livestock grazing and range.

- Robin Boies asked if the amendment would be challenged since we were only amending and not revising the entire RMP. Bryan Fuell answered that the BLM already had plans to revise RMP just not right away so it was more timely to separate this action from an entire RMP revision process. Ken Miller also stated that it's the Spruce Settlement Agreement that is prompting the amendment.
- Vince Garcia added that by completing the RMP amendment now, that by the time the RMP revision is done; the amendment can be rolled in and updated to become a better product.
- Bryan Fuell stated that recreation will be a component in the RMP amendment but not “the” component. Balanced with other resource concerns.
- Robin Boies asked if this would fall under the LCC initiative. Response is that this project is more site specific. Robin suggested using holistic management for this project.
- Tony Carone expressed concern that trails might be closed off to mining areas as a means to keep people safe. Bryan Fuell discussed Abandon Mine Land (AML) projects in the area.

Vince Garcia officially closed the public comment period at 11:00 am.

Bryan Fuell discussed the Spruce Mountain Restoration/Fuels Project. Many proposed treatments to improve wildlife habitat and reverse PJ encroachment. 10,000 acres proposed for treatments throughout the area.

- Tom Connelly asked if we thought about using mistletoe as a treatment for the trees.
- Vince Garcia said that the Native Americans in the Ely area were concerned about fuels projects that involved Pinion nuts.
- Bill Wolf asked how we prioritize these kinds of projects. Bryan Fuell and Allen Jenne responded that it's based on concerns for wildlife habitat. NDOW has been involved for many years in the Spruce Mountain area.
- Ely District representative Gary Medlyn stated that Ely has an RMP that allows them to do landscape level fuels projects. Ely was told by a solicitor from DOJ that an up to date RMP allows them to go to court successfully to carry projects forward.

Encouraged Elko to update their RMP and said a landscape level analysis also helps to show why we are here proposing projects.

- Jacob Carter suggested that the BLM use Ely's fuels projects as examples, they have done a great job.

Bryan Fuell briefly discussed the Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP) power transmission line.

Bill Wolf asked how much land was purchased by Mrs. Pickens in the area. Clay responded about 18,000 acres of private. Tax inquiries were made. Clay stated that Saving Americas Mustangs is 501c3 non profit organization. Bryan Fuell stated that Madeline had expressed that she intends to pay taxes on her private lands.

Robin Boies concerned about the allotment and how much monitoring has been done. Bryan Fuell responded that specialists have collected a lot of monitoring data on grazing and wild horse use.

Bill Wolf asked how HMAs were determined. JohnWinnepenninkx responded with a history and that they were based on historic horse presence and explained the difference between an herd area (HA) and a herd management area (HMA).

Close out at 12:15- Lunch

Group travels south to Goshute Valley and up the valley to private lands on east side of Hogan Tunnel near Flowery Lake (east side of Pequops).

#### **IV. Private Lands at Flowery Lake**

Bryan Fuell discusses that Madeline Pickens also owns this piece of private land; water wells in the area; lack of infrastructure at this piece of private; allotment boundaries and need for fences and maintaining existing fences.

Ken Miller discusses Private and Public eco-sanctuary proposals and the Washington Office parameters for the horse program and the eco-sanctuaries. Eco-sanctuaries must be more economical than long term holding. Need to be sustainable.

Robin Boies commented that the BLM has a grave responsibility in how the eco-sanctuary is presented to the public. The story has to be accurate and people held accountable, the truth be told. BLM also needs to be more vocal in its story.

Discussion on the value of offset of 1,000 wild horses to do all this; AML for Spruce; and the non-reproducing herd on private lands.

Kevin Lee asks who is taking the risk, the public or the private entity.

Jacob Carter suggests that RFID tags or something like that needs to be used in private horses. Bryan Fuell points out that anything that comes out of short/long term holding facilities will be freeze branded.

Robin Boies asked what will be done to keep horses from overgrazing in the white sage areas on the allotment. Clay Nannini responded that they would have some fencing and feed capabilities.

Tom Connolly said that if possible the maintenance level of the horses should be kept at zero growth and maintained this way rather than with no growth and adopting out. By adopting out, there is a dis-service to the quality of horses in the U.S.

Discussion on taking cows out of the equation and what that means for the allotment. Clay stated that Mrs. Pickens bought the rights to all of this, including the AUMs. BLMs job is resource management and they make the rules that Mrs. Pickens intends to follow. He challenged anyone to give a good reason why this (eco-sanctuary) is a bad idea.

Discussion on how the eco-sanctuary and Mrs. Pickens have handled themselves, suggested that Mrs. Pickens work at local level to get buyoff on her proposal, also suggestion for a collaborative planning team working with BLM and Mrs. Pickens. BLM discussed how the process works once there is an official proposal.

Jacob Carter suggests that the collateral costs associated with an eco-sanctuary negate obvious "cost savings" difference between current long term holding and "eco-sanctuary" holding.

Jeff White asked RAC group what would be appropriate for their involvement and when that would take place. Agreement that if a proposal(s) is ready to be discussed at the August 25&26 RAC meeting, BLM will work to distribute that information to RAC members before the meeting. Otherwise an updated timeline and a review of how the Agreement process works will be provided at that meeting.

## **V. Long Canyon Exploration**

Jeff White gave a presentation on the Long Canyon Exploration project.

## **VI. Close Out**

Jeff White thanked everyone and entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made, seconded and carried. Next meeting will be August 25 and 26, 2011 in Eureka, Nevada.